

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Official vs. Unofficial Functions

1. **PURPOSE.** To explain the difference between official and unofficial functions.

2. **BOTTOM LINE.** As a general rule, hails and farewells, dining ins/outs, military balls, holiday office parties and social events at private or government quarters are not official functions. Thus, only very limited government resources, excluding appropriated funds, non-tactical vehicles (NTVs), government personnel and equipment are authorized.

3. **DISCUSSION.**

a. Government resources may be used for "official purposes" only. Official purposes are ones that are specifically provided for by law or are essential for successful completion of a DoD function, action or operation. The underlying ethics principle is that employees shall protect and conserve federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.

b. The following are examples of functions that may be considered official. Even so, a pre-event legal opinion should be obtained from an ethics counselor:

(1) Unit organizational days, staff rides, conferences and seminars when there is a training benefit;

(2) Receptions when Official Representation Funds would be authorized;

(3) International liaison functions; and

(4) Official ceremonies when the government employee is actively participating in the ceremony or attending if the ceremony is determined to be of significantly high interest.

c. Examples of unofficial functions that do not support the use of appropriated funds, government personnel, equipment and NTVs, except in very narrowly defined exceptions are:

(1) Hails and Farewells;

(2) Dining-ins/outs and regimental balls;

(3) Office birthday, anniversary and holiday parties (even when at place of duty);

(4) Office luncheons; and

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(5) Social functions at private or government quarters, even when the command or staff is invited, e.g., birthday parties, weddings, picnics and block parties.

d. Only on rare occasions could these unofficial events become official. Simply inviting or designating a speaker to discuss command issues does not create an official event nor does simply declaring an event to be a "training event" or "official place of duty." Without a prior legal review by an ethics counselor, government resources should not be used in support of the above listed functions.

e. Some of the general exceptions to the above limitations include the use of:

(1) Music, Aerial, Ceremonial and Troop units for Public Affairs (AR 360-1). The band/chorus and color guard may be used at civilian-sponsored social, civic and cultural events such as community concerts, banquets, dinners, receptions, carnivals, festivals, sports season openings and anniversaries, if the musical participation includes patriotic music as opposed to pure entertainment and clearly establishes the support as an appearance by an Army unit. The patriotic portion of an Army presentation normally consists of military or patriotic songs, honors and/or music to accompany the presentation of the colors.

(2) Senior Leaders as Feature Speakers at Dining Ins/Outs or Regimental Balls and Use of DoD Facilities and Equipment (excluding audio-visual support) (JER, para. 3-211). DoD employees may serve as speakers, panel members or other participants, or, on a limited basis, DoD facilities and equipment (and the services of DoD employees necessary to make proper use of the equipment), may be used as logistical support in an event sponsored by a non-Federal entity, except for fundraising and membership drive events, when the specific provisions of JER, para. 3-211 are met (there are seven factors to be weighed and any fees charged to attend must be reasonable).

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